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SUBJECT: SOLANA FINDS PESSIMISM, BUT ALSO DETERMINATION TO
AVOID FAILURE AT ANNAPOLIS, DURING MIDDLE EAST TOUR

Classified By: Acting Deputy PolCouns Vincent Carver for reasons 1.5 (b
and d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: According to Council Secretariat Director for the Middle East, Christian Jouret, EU HR Javier Solana detected a great deal of pessimism regarding the Annapolis meeting, but also a determination to avoid failure, during his November 11-14 talks in Egypt, Israel, and the Palestinian Territories. Solana will present an EU Action Strategy on Israel-Palestine to EU FMs November 19; Jouret said it focuses on EU involvement and assistance to the region; its chief goal is to maintain member state assistance for the Palestinians and for peace negotiations. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) Jouret (who accompanied Solana) told us November 16 that Solana met with Mubarak and the Arab League SYG, as well as President Abbas, in Cairo November 11-12; with PM Olmert, FM Livni, and opposition leaders in Israel November 13, and with PM Fayyad and other PA officials in the Palestinian Territories November 14. According to Jouret, interlocutors from all sides expressed pessimism that the Annapolis meeting will produce anything concrete. All, however, quickly added that they would do everything possible to avoid failure at the meeting. In the EU's view, "getting something -- the launching of a process, and agreeing on what that actually is" should be the objective of Annapolis. Jouret said both the Israelis and the Palestinians see two key objectives for the initial stages of a process launched at Annapolis: implementation of the first phase of the Road Map, including a freeze on Israeli settlement activity, and Palestinian "enhancement" of security, including dismantling terrorist networks and confiscating weapons.

¶3. (C) Jouret added that both sides will look to the United States to define the parameters of the process; the Palestinians particularly see Washington as being in a position to judge whether the two sides are meeting their commitments. Jouret underscored that this is not how the EU views the process. Reviewing fulfillment of the parties' obligations, he stressed, is a responsibility of the Quartet. He noted that Solana and various member states want Annapolis to energize a "genuine" negotiating process that will quickly tackle the "tough issues," including refugees, borders, Jerusalem, and water.

¶4. (C) According to Jouret, both sides, particularly the Palestinians (with FM Livni appearing more ambivalent -- reportedly adopting a "why not?" approach), see that Syria must be part of the process. Jouret added that the Arab League and Egypt supported Syrian participation in negotiations, reasoning that the more Damascus is involved, the more it will be detached from Iran. The Arab League SYG and Mubarak said that if Syria does not go to Annapolis, it might be possible to include Damascus at a subsequent meeting -- perhaps one which might be hosted by Moscow.

15. (C) Jouret provided few details regarding the Action Strategy (also referred to by some EU officials as an "Action Plan") that Solana presented to PSC ambassadors November 16 and will present to EU FMs at the November 19 GAERC. Jouret characterized the document as geared toward "internal motivation" -- aimed at convincing member states to continue their efforts, particularly regarding aid to the Palestinian Territories and the construction of an eventual Palestinian State. It also supports advancing the Arab League's peace initiative. Jouret added that the Action Strategy is a means to demonstrate publicly that the EU has done a great deal for the region and will continue to support peace negotiations.

16. (C) Solana did not discuss Hamas with his interlocutors, Jouret said in response to our question. Jouret stressed that the EU's policy on Hamas is clear and Brussels will maintain it. That said, a peace agreement will have to be implemented in Gaza as well.

17. (C) Solana and Livni also discussed Iran, but Jouret claimed not to have details of that discussion. He noted that Solana will meet again with "one of the Iranian nuclear negotiators, but we are not sure with which one" by the end of November. The location of the meeting is not yet determined.

18. (C) Finally, Jouret observed that Olmert and Abbas "trust" each other; both viewing the other as someone with whom to do business.

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